

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROUNDS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that on Wednesday, January 28, 2015, at 2:30 p.m., the Senate proceed to vote in relation to the following amendments in the order listed: Cardin No. 75, Peters No. 70, Sanders No. 23, Cruz No. 15, Merkley No. 125, Moran No. 73, Whitehouse No. 148, Daines No. 132, Coons No. 115, Collins No. 35, Carper No. 120, Murkowski No. 166, Heitkamp No. 133, Gillibrand No. 48, Barrasso No. 245, Cardin No. 124, Daines No. 246, and Burr No. 92, as modified with the changes at the desk; further, that all amendments on this list be subject to a 60-vote affirmative threshold for adoption and that no second-degrees be in order to the amendments. I ask consent that there be 2 minutes of debate equally divided between each vote, and that all votes after the first in the series be 10-minute votes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 92), as modified, is as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. _____. PERMANENT REAUTHORIZATION OF LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 200302 of title 54, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (b), in the matter preceding paragraph (1), by striking “During the period ending September 30, 2015, there” and inserting “There”; and

(2) in subsection (c)(1), by striking “through September 30, 2015”.

(b) PUBLIC ACCESS.—Section 200306 of title 54, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(c) PUBLIC ACCESS.—Not less than 1.5 percent of amounts made available for expenditure under section 200303 or \$10,000,000, whichever is greater, shall be available each fiscal year for projects that secure recreational public access to existing Federal public land for hunting, fishing, and other recreational purposes.”.

MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MARY LEAHY'S CAREER AS AN EDUCATOR

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I have the privilege of being a lifelong Vermonter, as were my parents and my brother and sister. All Vermonters realize that in a small State like ours, it takes the dedication and hard work of very special and talented people to make our State great.

I will take a moment as a proud brother to mention one such person, my younger sister, Mary Leahy. Mary's work with adult basic education and

teaching and her ability to give adults who have not had the capability to read a newfound ability is profound. It is impossible to calculate the number of lives she has dramatically improved in our State through her work. I still carry the memory of watching a grandfather with tears in his eyes, as he read a simple child's book to his grandchild. He then told me that he had never been able to read to his child, the grandchild's parent, but at least in his later years he could read to the grandchild. I thought what a gift. I thought again of Mary as I read an article printed in a number of our media in Vermont, written by Nancy Graff, about this part of Mary's career. I ask unanimous consent that it be printed in the RECORD at this point.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From VT Digger.org, Dec. 28, 2014]

IN THIS STATE: FOR MARY LEAHY, LITERACY GOES BEYOND READING

(By Nancy Graff)

Several miles up a dirt road in Marshfield, Mary Leahy's driveway swings up a modest rise on the right. In the wake of a recent snowstorm, ice, clumps of snow, ruts, and shattered branches have created endless road stubble. Traffic is infrequent. Leahy hasn't seen Camel's Hump, a breathtaking view normally framed by her house's large west-facing windows, for almost a week due to stubborn low-hanging clouds. No other structure or human being intrudes.

In this isolated spot, Leahy has spent 20 years thinking through what it means to be literate. She believes it all comes down to creating communities that welcome everyone.

Two years ago Leahy, a Montpelier native, retired from Central Vermont Adult Basic Education after 34 years as co-director and four years before that as a field tutor. Throughout her tenure, she says in her soft voice, she worked to make adult literacy programs “as inclusive as any other form of education, so that everyone could become part of the cultural community.”

Leahy is sitting in her living room, her telltale shock of white hair the same color as the walls inside and the snow piled outside. She can tell hundreds of stories about people she has encountered over the past decades. One woman holds a special place in the evolution of her thinking. According to Leahy, when this woman came to be tutored in reading, Leahy asked her why she felt the need to learn now, long after she had left school. She replied that she had a big maple tree in her front yard, and a dream that one day when she finished her chores, she would take a book and sit under that tree and read it.

“That became the beacon for the rest of my work,” Leahy says.

One book in particular provided more inspiration. A middle-aged man under Mary's tutelage asked if they could read “Black Beauty” together. “Why that book?” she remembers asking. He had shown no interest in horses. He explained that “Black Beauty” had been popular when he was in school, but he could never join in the discussions about it because he couldn't read. He wanted to know how it ends.

“I think ‘Black Beauty’ was the most formative book I read as a child. It taught me about being compassionate. I read it over and over and over,” she says.

And then there was a favorite nun at Leahy's college, St. Catherine University, in

Minneapolis. She taught Leahy that “work has to serve the world.”

After graduating and returning to Vermont, Leahy briefly tried her hand at farming before she started working in literacy.

“Literacy took up my imagination,” Leahy says. “It took up my heart, and I could see the changes in people's lives.”

Among the mementos from her father's shop that Mary Leahy keeps in her house is the letterpress type that once printed the “ICE” cards that people would put in their front windows when they wanted the iceman to make a delivery. Beautifully rendered in wood to begin with, the letter faces are as smooth as glass after decades of use. Beside them is a well-used brass can that contained solvent to clean the type.

Soon, however, she began to see that being able to identify a letter, being able to associate that letter with a sound, stringing letters into words, and understanding the meaning of the words were not enough. She recalls men at a local electric company who were afraid to requisition a part to fix a machine they could run with their eyes closed because they were unable to fill out the form needed to get the part. They learned the fundamentals of reading for their jobs, but until they could engage with ideas they remained outliers in the world's cultural community.

“They needed to be included,” Leahy says. And that meant being able to help their children with schoolwork, being able to articulate their ideas and opinions, being able to teach themselves to learn.

Bringing the newly literate into the life of their families and home communities, into the community of ideas that explore our humanity and world, became Leahy's goal.

These days CVABE serves approximately 600 clients, down from a high of 800 a few years ago. Leahy is quick to praise the people with whom she has worked over the years and other organizations that have made literacy work possible, especially the Vermont Council on the Humanities, with its emphasis on teaching reading not just as a vital skill but as a revelation of the human condition.

Each student presents unique challenges. Some are well-educated immigrants who need to learn English to work in their field. Some have learning disabilities that weren't addressed. Others have lived in such chaotic situations that school wasn't a priority. Still others have come from such poverty that illiteracy was a legacy passed from generations.

When she began working for CVABE, the organization stressed one-on-one in-home tutoring. ABE itself was a feature of the war on poverty that was an extension of the Department of Education. Leahy's job was to develop tutoring programs by recruiting students and volunteers. To find students, she went door to door asking if anyone needed literacy assistance.

Being illiterate is not something people want to admit, she says. “There's a chronic fear of being found out that you can't do what everyone else can. You think you're alone in not being able to do this.”

And so she met them wherever they felt comfortable. She tutored in homes, in restaurants, in libraries, sometimes in her car.

Eventually, the Department of Education pushed the ABE program to move toward a more center-based structure. So Leahy oversaw that change, as well as many others, including gaining independence, forming a board, fundraising, starting an alternative high school program for teens, and very important, from her perspective, hosting reading and discussion programs. In 1989 she helped organize the first statewide conference for Vermont's newly literate, ABE